

FREE
Balloon!

LET'S READ TOGETHER

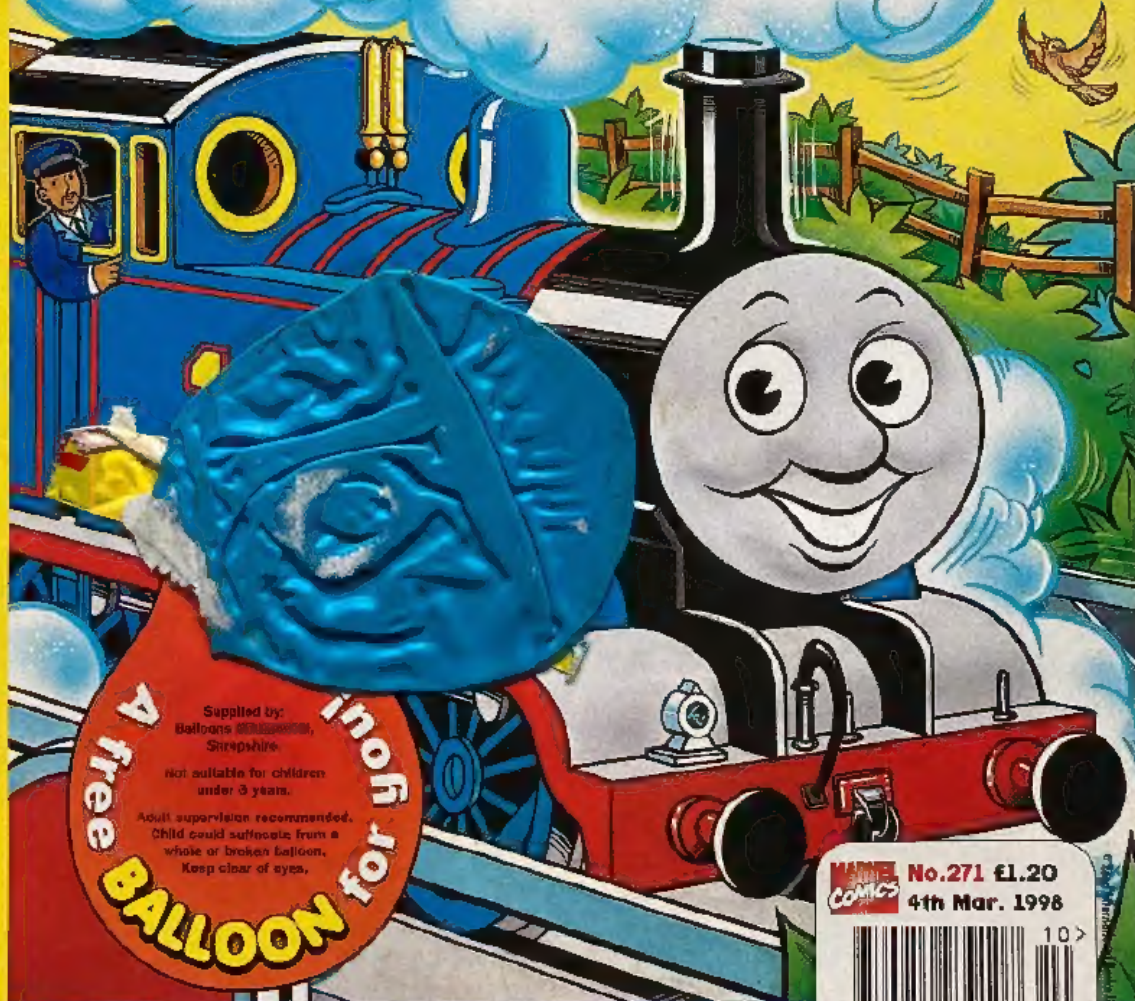
THOMAS THE TANK ENGINE & FRIENDS™

Based on the Railway Series by The Rev. W. Awdry.



THE TANK ENGINE
& FRIENDS

THOMAS



Supplied by:
Balloons (Shropshire),
Shropshire.
Not suitable for children
under 3 years.
Adult supervision recommended.
Child could suffocate from a
whole or broken balloon.
Keep clear of eyes.

A free
BALLOON for you!

COMICS No. 271 £1.20
4th Mar. 1998

10 >

9 770934 939107

Puzzles · Reading · Colouring

Hello, everybody!

In this issue..

- 3** Cruising!
- 8** Spot the difference!
- 10** Flying Fish!
- 12** Gordon and George!
- 16** Thomas and Bertie!
- 18** Lost Property!
- 21** Join the dots!
- 22** Competition!
- 23** Timetable game!
- 24** Messages in the Sky!
- 28** Mail Train!
- 30** Next time!

Island of Sodor Railway
This comic belongs to

THOMAS THE TANK ENGINE & FRIENDS is published fortnightly by MARVEL COMICS, a division of PANINI UK Ltd. Managing Director: Mike Stevens; Editor: Alan O'Keefe; Editorial team: Karen Brown & Kary Boettcher; Designer: Steve Rowlinson; Production: Mark Irwin; Product Manager: Jim Maitland. Printed by: Printers House, Coach & Horse, Potters, Kent, TN2 8JL. All THOMAS THE TANK ENGINE & FRIENDS material published by Marvel UK is the property of the THOMAS THE TANK ENGINE & FRIENDS Ltd. All rights reserved. No similarity between any of the names, characters, places or events in this publication with those of any living or dead person or institution is intended, and any such similarity which may arise is purely coincidental. Printed in the UK. Advertising: Roy Jones, Essential Media, Tel: 0171 833 8030. Subscriptions: MIRA, Tel: 01855 410310. Distributed by Morrisforce (UK) Ltd, 207 Tottenham Court Road, LONDON W1P 0AU. Tel: 0121 263 5555. ISSN 0950-9399.

Cruising!

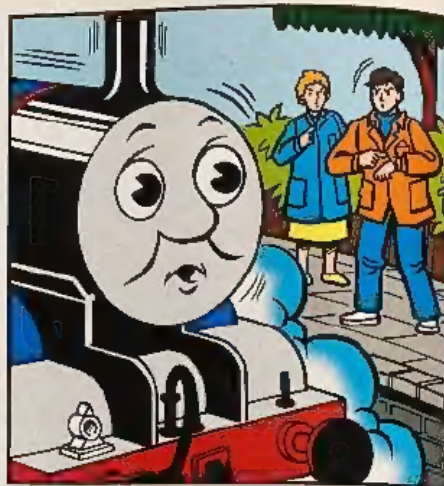


1. "I hope you're feeling full of puff today, Thomas!" the Fat Controller said, one morning. "You're going to do a special tour of the island for the passengers of a cruise ship!"

2. Thomas picked up his coaches, Annie and Clarabel, and steamed off to the harbour. "What a magnificent cruise ship!" he cried, as the people walked down the long gang plank.



3. As the cruise ship passengers boarded the carriages, the driver told Thomas, "cruising is all about travelling slowly and relaxing to enjoy the scenery."



4. "That sounds wonderful, I think I'll cruise today!" whistled Thomas. He puffed gently along to the Main Station to find people were tutting and waiting impatiently for him.

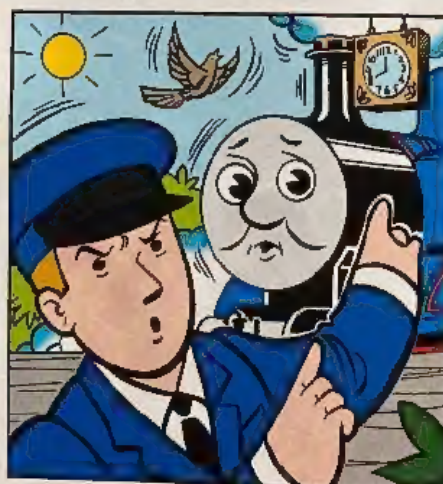


7. By the afternoon, Thomas, the cruise engine, was seriously behind schedule. One of the cruise ship passengers got out of his carriage at the next stop to talk to the driver.

8. He wasn't happy. "The ship sails at 7 o'clock, we'd better be back in time!" he warned. "Did you hear that Thomas?" shouted his driver. "All this cruising of yours has to stop!"



5. Gordon was looking very stern on the other platform. "You're late!" he whistled, but Thomas didn't seem to have a care in the world. "Hey, relax Gordon! I'm cruising!" he called.



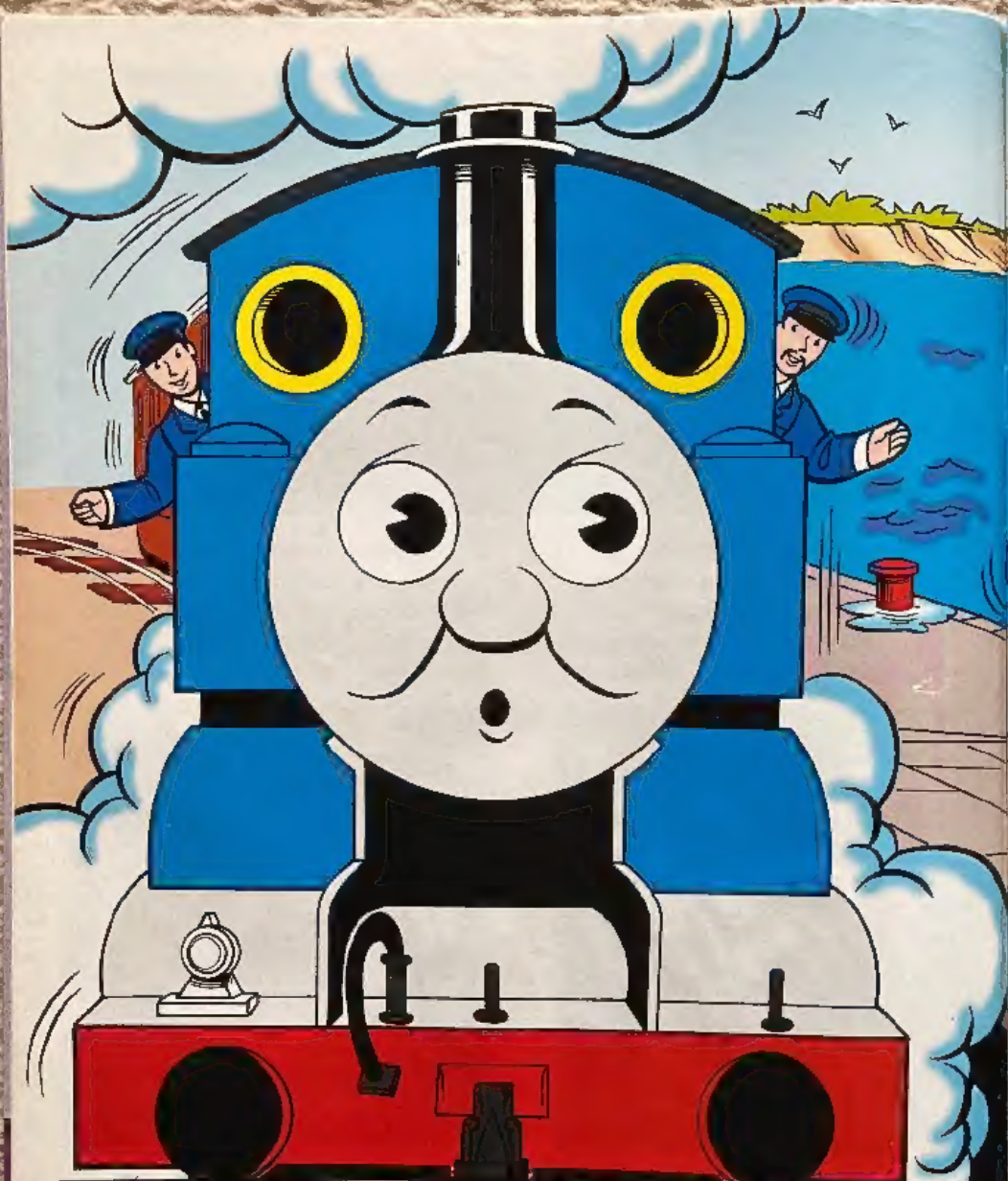
6. Thomas arrived late at the next stop. "What time do you call this!" said the Station Master, pointing to the platform clock. "Don't worry," called Thomas, "I'm just cruising!"



9. "I'm sorry, I didn't know we had to be back for a special time. Full steam ahead!" whistled Thomas, grinning. Clickety-clack! The wheels on the track got faster and louder.



10. Annie and Clarabel's windows rattled. "I never knew such a little engine could go so fast!" said one passenger. "And after going so slowly this morning!" said another.



11. Time was running out for the cruise ship passengers. As Thomas neared the quay, he made a big wish. "Oh I do hope the cruise ship waits for us!" he whistled to himself.

12. Then Thomas' driver spotted smoke coming from the ship's funnel. "We're too late!" he shouted, anxiously. Just then, a loud "PARP!" rang out from the ship's horn.



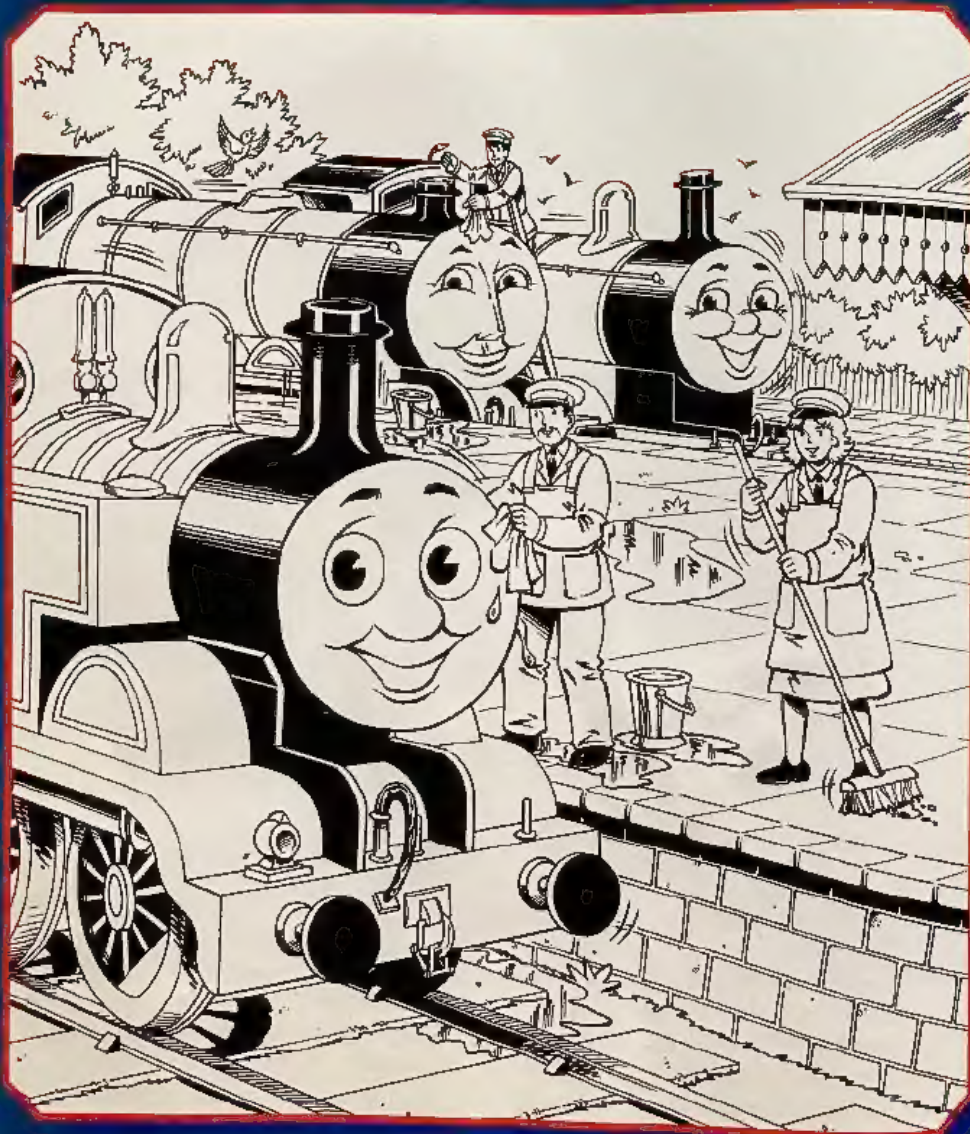
13. As Thomas pulled in, he was horrified. The ship had left! The Fat Controller was waiting for him. "You're late!" he said, sternly. "You're also very lucky," he continued.

14. "The ship isn't leaving. It had to anchor further out as the harbour got very busy!" Thomas was relieved. "Next time," he puffed, "I'll leave the cruising to the cruise ship!"



Spot the difference!

Thomas, Gordon and James are having a spring clean! These two pictures look the same but there are five differences. Can you spot them all?



Answers: Thomas' lamp, Thomas' whistle, James' dome, the bucket by Thomas, the woman's cap

Flying Fish!

Skarloey worked on a pretty branch line in the country, and everyone was very friendly at the small stations along the way.

One day, he was pulling a cargo of apples, and at one village station, some school-boys asked if they could have one. "Go on," smiled the driver. "We have so many apples, the Fat Controller won't mind at all!"

Later that week, Skarloey was carrying a big delivery of fresh fish. It was packed tightly into special wagons, and it made a very heavy, very smelly load!

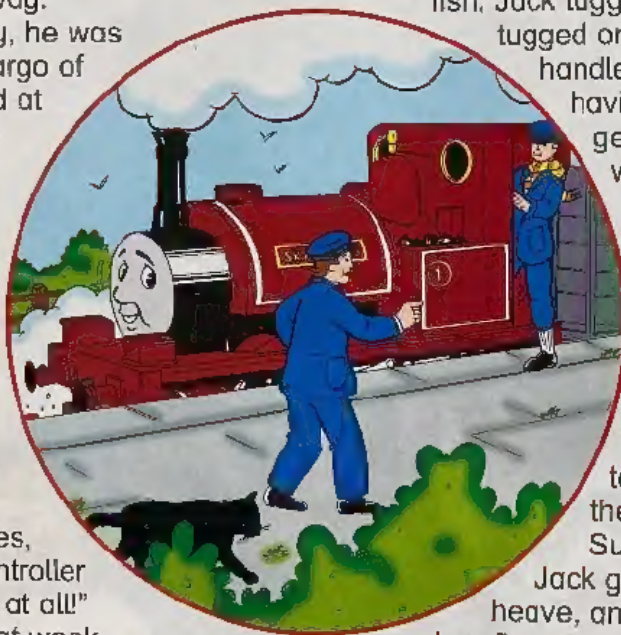
When they stopped to take on water at a country station, Jack the Station Master asked, "I don't suppose there's a chance I could have a little fish for my

cat?" The driver said, "Yes, I'm sure the Fat Controller won't mind!" and while he was having his tea, Jack went to get some fish. Jack tugged and

tugged on the truck's handle, but was having trouble getting the wagon door to open. He didn't even notice that the Fat Controller had just driven up in his car to inspect the station! Suddenly,

Jack gave a big heave, and the wagon door flew open. The load of fish was so heavy it forced the wagon door to fly open. The fish came tumbling out of the wagon, all over the platform! They didn't stop pouring out until the Station Master was buried in them, with only his head poking out the top. Well, what a sight!

Skarloey and his driver looked back down the station



platform at the funny sight. But then they saw the Fat Controller approaching. He was so astonished to see such goings on that he was simply lost for words. He just stood and shook his head.

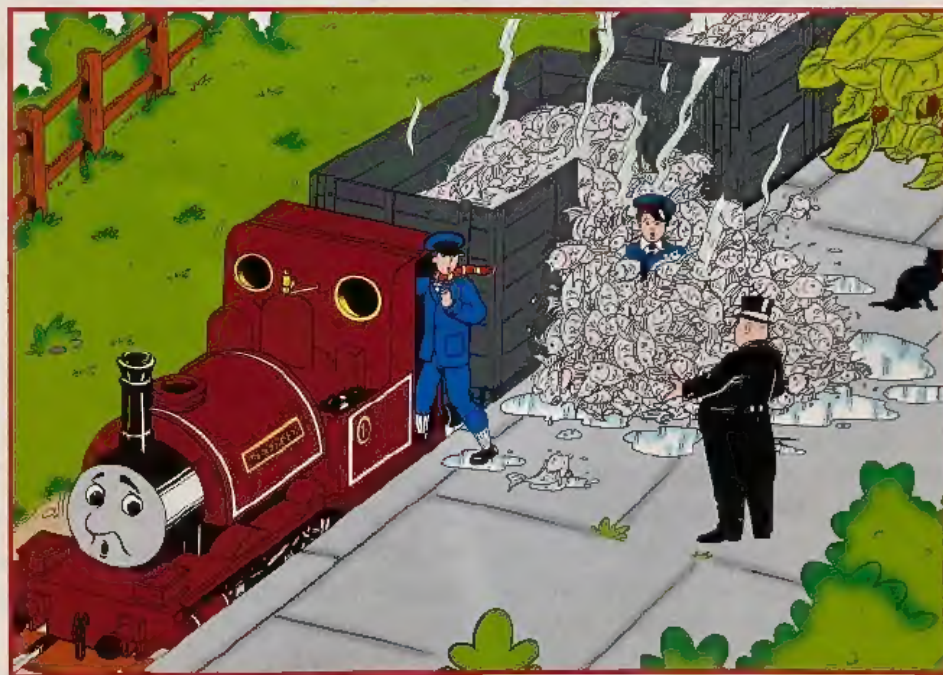
"There," said Skarloey, "You said he wouldn't mind!" But the Fat Controller did mind! He was very unhappy. The driver and the Station Master had to try to clear all the fish off the platform in double-quick time.

When they had finally finished, there were still some fish left over on the platform. There was no more room for them in the wagon. "This would

never have happened if the wagon had been packed properly in the first place," said the Fat Controller, "I'm afraid you must leave some fish behind at this station!"

Skarloey's driver felt very embarrassed, and had to promise never to give goods away again.

The Station Master felt silly too. But there was someone who was very happy. Can you guess who that was? The Station Master's cat! She had the biggest fish supper she had ever eaten!



Gordon and George!



1 Gordon, the fastest engine on Sodor, loves pulling his Express at great speed. But one day, his driver made him slow down. "There are workmen on the line," he told Gordon, "building a level crossing for the new road." Gordon whistled

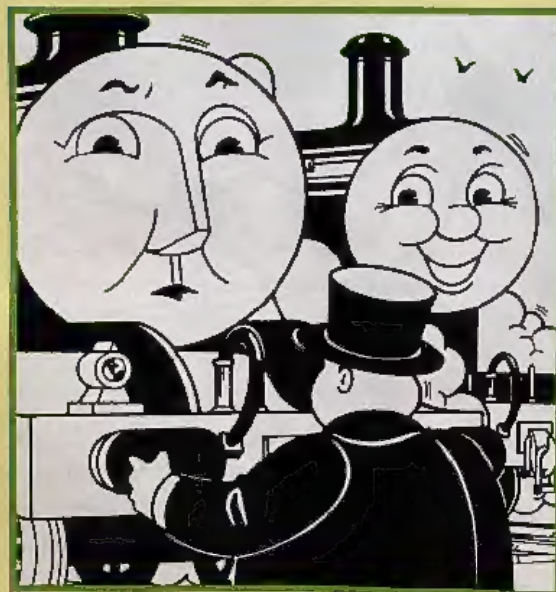
crossly to clear the track. Nearby, George the Steamroller was slowly rolling off his trailer. "Lazybones! Being carried about as usual," huffed Gordon. "Only because I'm busy building new roads - to put railways out of business!" taunted George.



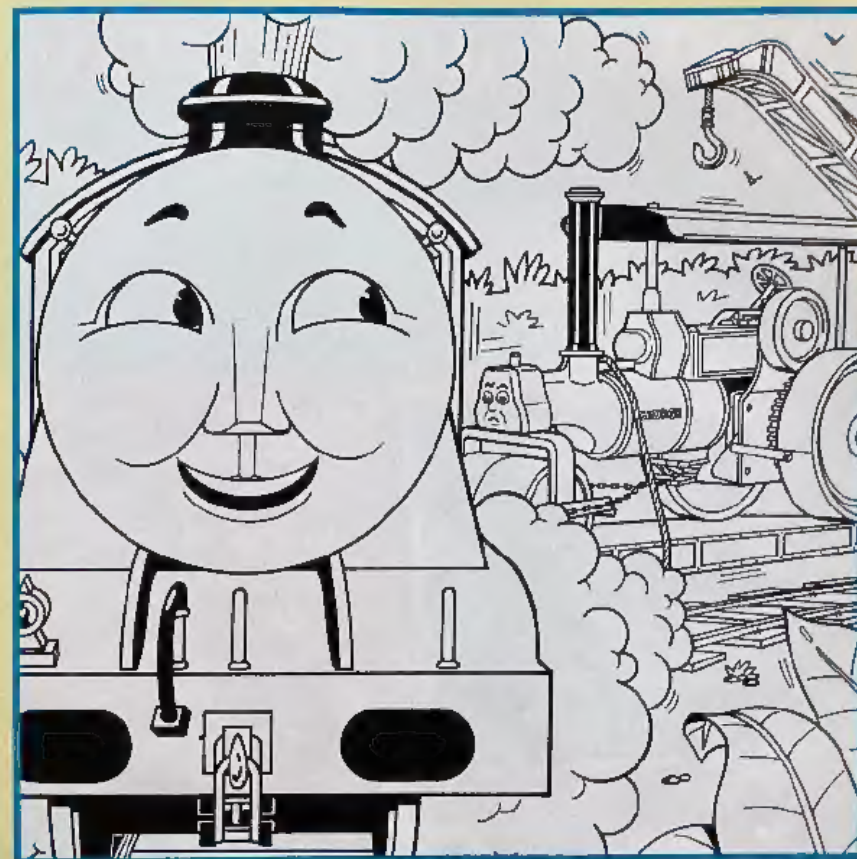
2 Instead of paying attention as he came off his trailer, George carried on grumbling about railways. He didn't keep straight, and buckled the ramp

badly. "It doesn't matter," he muttered. "I'm down now - let's get rolling!" Some workmen examined the damaged ramp, and they looked worried.

3 Later, there was a telephone call to the Fat Controller's office. "Yes, I understand the problem," the Fat Controller told the caller. "Don't worry, I think we can help." Then he went outside to the yard. The Fat Controller spoke to Gordon and James. He explained what he wanted them to do that morning.



4 "You will pull the Express this afternoon, James - Gordon is needed for a special job." James was delighted, but Gordon sighed unhappily. And when he was coupled to a flat-bed truck, and lifting crane, he was miserable. "Instead of pulling coaches at speed, I'll be doing something slow and boring," he moaned.



5 Yet, soon after arriving at his destination, Gordon cheered up at once - he discovered that his special job was to haul away George! The workmen had phoned the Fat Controller for help because the Steamroller's trailer was so damaged that it could not

be fixed for days. Grumpy George was speechless with embarrassment on the truck behind Gordon. "Lucky for you roads haven't put railways out of business just yet," chuckled the big blue engine, as he happily hauled George away. George didn't say a word!

The end

Thomas and Bertie!

Based on *The Railway Series* by the Rev W Awdry.

Every afternoon Thomas puffs along his branch line with Annie and Clarabel. Whenever the children hear Thomas coming, they stand on a nearby bridge and wave until he is out of sight. One day Thomas was running late. He stopped at a signal to talk to some of the children.



1 Percy was waiting there too. "Hurry up, Thomas," he called. "If you're late the Fat Controller may replace you." Thomas was worried. Next day at the goods yard, there was an inspector waving a red flag and some children waving too. Their school bus had broken down.

2 Thomas was to help the children to get home. He took them to the next station, where Bertie was waiting to take them home. When Thomas finished his journey he was late and worried that the Fat Controller would be cross. Thomas carried on working on his branch line, but the heat of the sun had bent the rails.



3 Thomas had to shunt trucks in the yard until the track was repaired. Bertie came again to help Thomas with his passengers. Thomas was miserable. "I've lost my passengers. They'll like Bertie better than me." Then the Fat Controller arrived to say the branch line was repaired.

4 He announced that he was going to change Thomas' timetable so that he could work together with Bertie more. At the station Thomas' passengers said, "Bertie is a good bus, but we missed our rides with you." Thomas thanked Bertie for looking after his passengers so well.



In Thomas the Tank Engine & Friends next time, you can read the story "Trust Thomas!"

Win a model of Bertie!

Five lucky winners can win a splendid model of Bertie from the ERTL engine range! Just send a postcard, with your name, age and address to: Thomas/271 model competition, Marvel Comics, Panini House, Coach and Horses Passage, The Pantiles, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, TN2 5UJ.

Closing date: February 26th 1998.



Lost Property!



It was a beautiful morning, Stephen jumped out of bed early. "Wake up Bridget," he cried, "It's Saturday!" The children were both very excited. Lady Hatt had promised to take them shopping in Wellsworth. She was going to buy them both a treat!



They got dressed quickly and went down to breakfast. "We had better hurry," said Lady Hatt. "The train leaves for town in half an hour!"

James, the red engine, was already waiting impatiently at the station when they arrived. They jumped aboard and set off on their way. They had been in too much of a rush to buy their tickets at the ticket office, so Lady Hatt bought them from the conductor on the train.

Before long, James pulled into the station in Wellsworth. Stephen and Bridget were so excited they could hardly wait



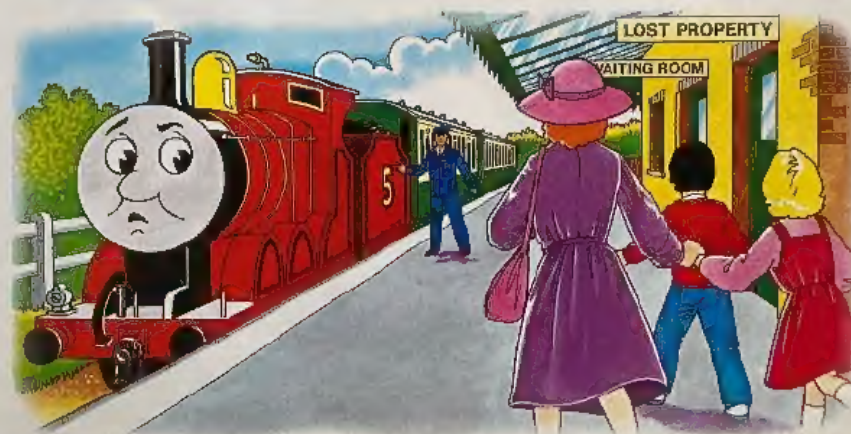
to get to the toy shop. "Wait for me!" cried Lady Hatt as she hurried along behind them.

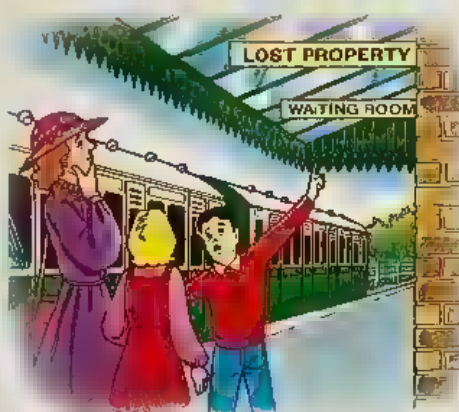
When they had had a good look around, Lady Hatt asked them what they wanted to buy. "I would like a doll's tea set please," said Bridget. "And I would like this magnifying glass so I can pretend to be a

detective and look for clues!" said Stephen. Lady Hatt took the things to the counter to pay. "Oh dear!" she gasped, looking in her handbag. "I can't find my purse anywhere! I'm very sorry children, I won't be able to buy your toys until we find it."

Stephen thought for a moment. Then he had an idea. "The last time you had your purse was when you paid the conductor for our tickets. You must have left it on the train!"

They all hurried off to Wellsworth Station. Luckily, James was waiting in the siding until it was time to make the journey back again. They looked everywhere in the carriage where they had been





sitting, but there was no sign of the purse.

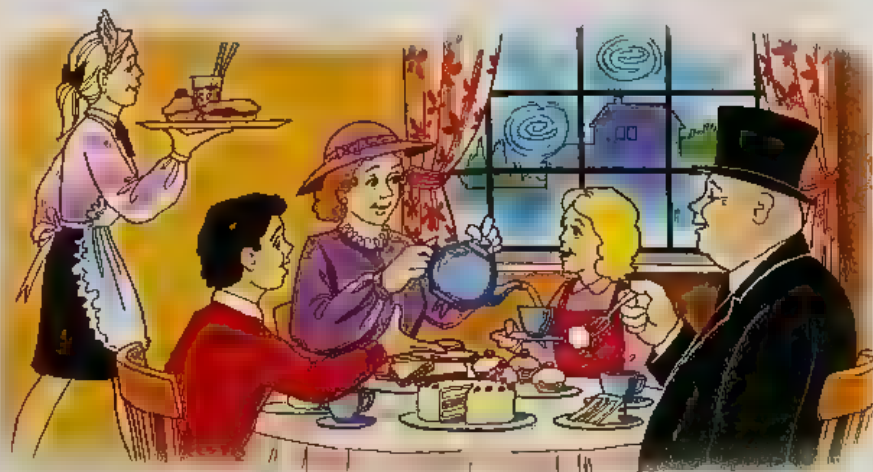
They were standing on the platform wondering what to do next, when Stephen had another idea. "Let's look in the lost property office," he said. "You're in luck! It's just been handed in," the guard told

them at the lost property office.

Lady Hatt was very glad to have her purse back again. She wanted to thank the children for helping her hunt for it. "I'm afraid the toy shop is closed now," she said, "but I will take you both out for a delicious tea instead!"

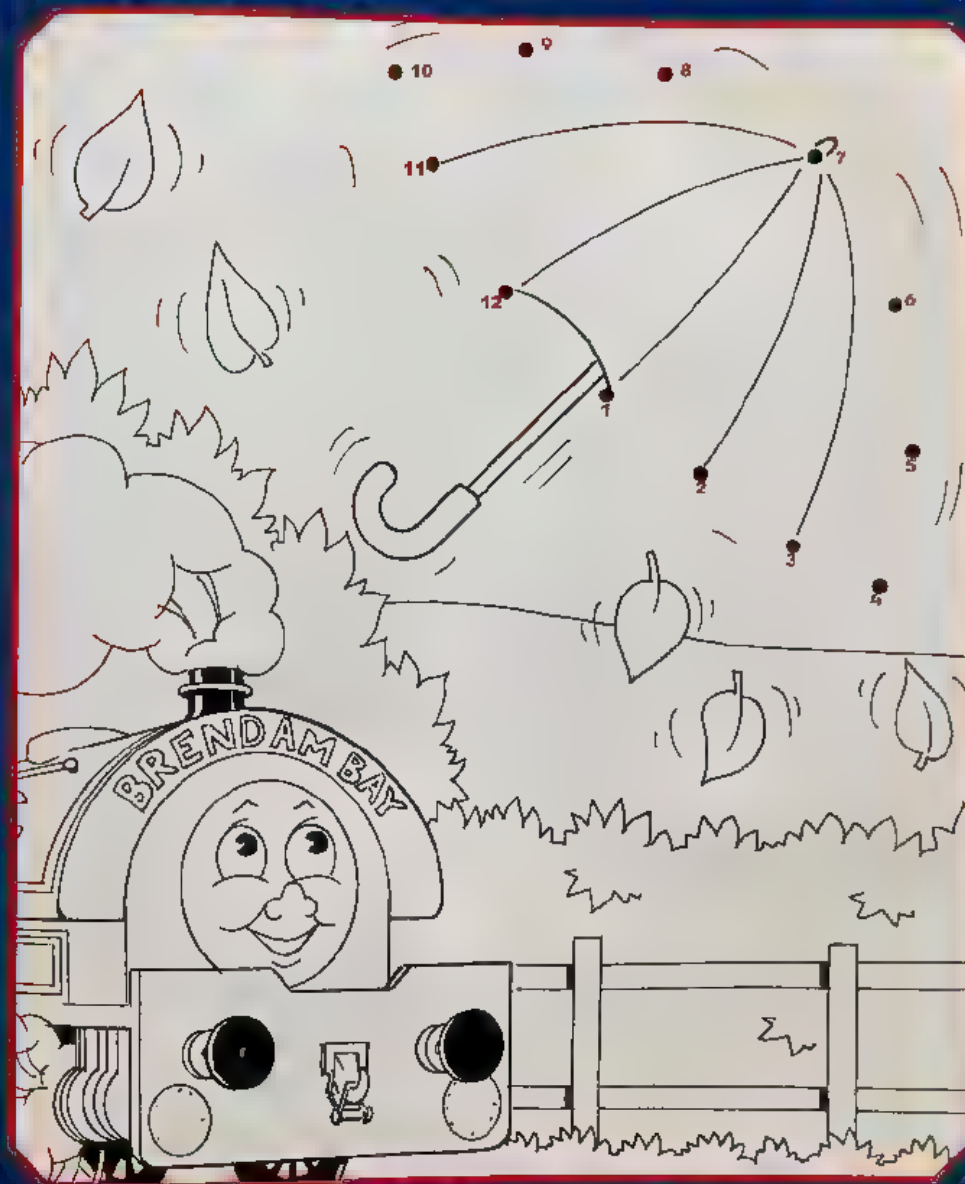
They went to a cafe and ordered cakes and buns and sandwiches. Stephen and Bridget agreed that it had been a great day out after all. "I had to be real detective when I looked for the purse!" said Stephen. "And I had a real tea party with a real tea set!" laughed Bridget.

THE END



Dot to dot!

What a very windy day! Join the dots to see what's blown away!



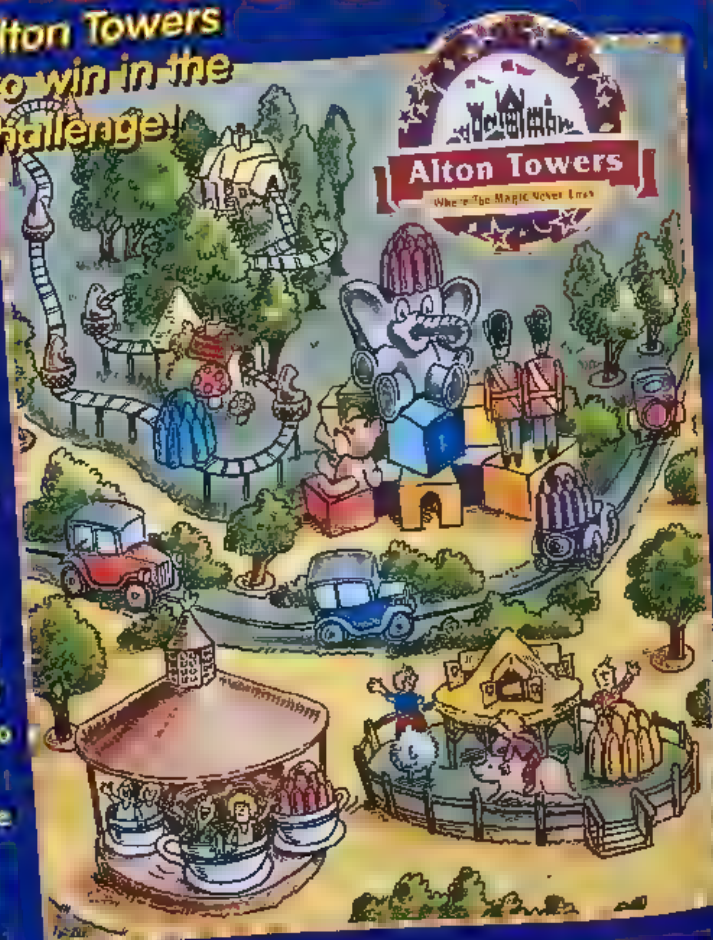
Now count how many leaves are blowing around!

Little 5 Jelly Challenge!

There are **4** Alton Towers family tickets to win in the Little **5** Jelly Challenge!

Not only can younger visitors experience over 25 rides and attractions in Storybook Land, Old MacDonald's Farm and Cred Street, but during Easter half term they can experience their own Little Jelly Challenge!

From 6-10 April 1998 all under 8s who have a go on all 5 rides - Squirrel Nutty, Toyland Tours, the Doodle-Do Derby, Vintage Cars & the T-Cups will win a prize!



For your chance to win, just complete the Jelly Challenge above by finding 5 jellies. Then cut out the maze, circle the jellies and send it to: Thomas/Jelly Challenge, Marvel Comics, Panini House, Coach and Horses Passage, The Pantiles, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, TN2 5UJ. Send us your answer, name, age and address to us by the 11th March 1998!

Family tickets include 2 adults and two children under the age of 11.

For more details about the Little 5 Jelly Challenge or Alton Towers, call 0990 204060.

Timetable game!

Can you help me guard? Answer some passenger's questions?

TIMETABLE From Main Station

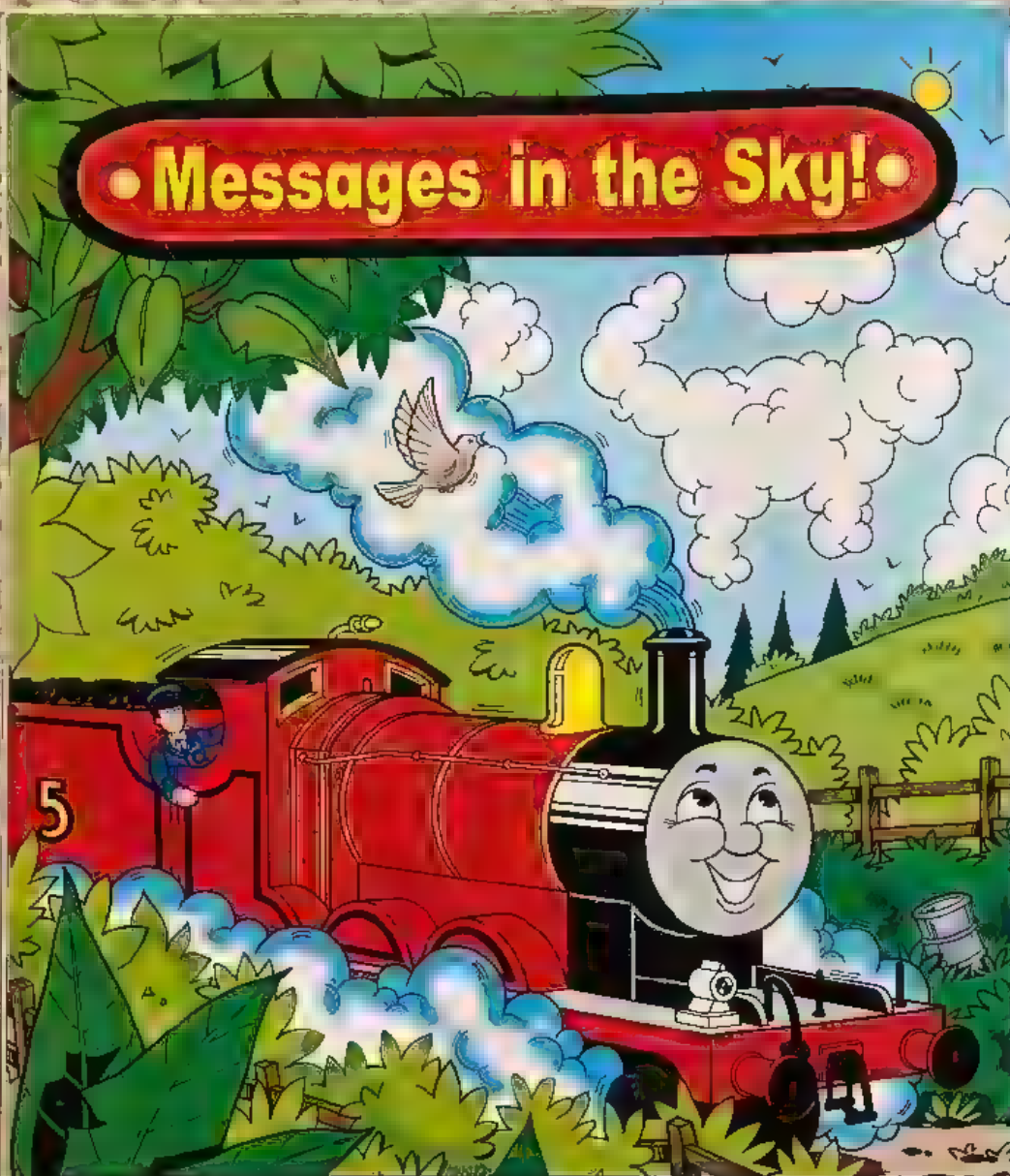
Engine	Destination	Departure time	Arrival time
Percy	Knapford	8.00	8.45
Thomas	Harbour	9.30	10.15
Gordon	Tidmouth	10.00	11.00
Daisy	Wellsworth	10.30	11.00
James	Brendam	11.00	11.30

- 1 Which engine has to leave first in the morning?
- 2 What time will Thomas leave the Main Station?
- 3 How long does it take James to get to Brendam?
- 4 What time will Daisy arrive in Wellsworth?
- 5 Where is Gordon going to?



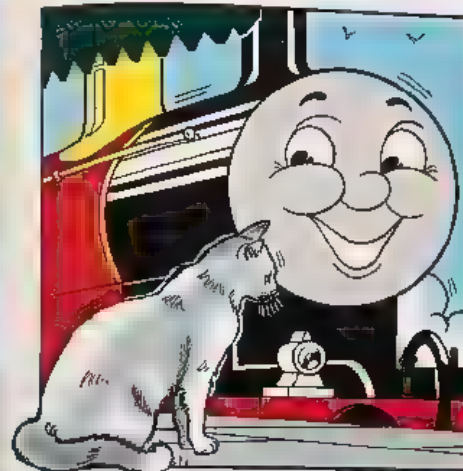
ANSWERS: 1 Percy 2 9.30 3 30 minutes 4 11.00 5 Tidmouth

• Messages in the Sky! •



1 One sunny morning, James was puffing along in the country without a care in the world when he noticed a big cloud up in the sky ahead. It was in the shape of a giant cat!

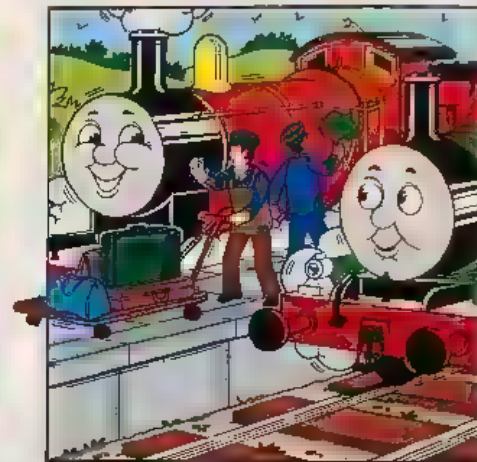
2 James was excited. "Maybe it means something!" he whistled. "Perhaps Sooty, the station cat, will meet us at the Main Station!" James' driver laughed. "What imagination!"



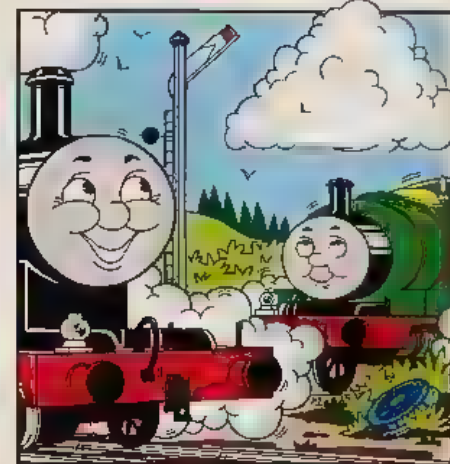
3 But sure enough, as they pulled in at the Main Station, Sooty was there to greet them with a friendly 'Meeowww'. "Good old Sooty! I knew you'd be here!" puffed James.



5 Later, James saw a big fish-shaped cloud! "You're going to have fish and chips tonight!" he shouted. His driver grinned. "Very good, James, it's Friday and Friday is fish day!"



4 James thought he was very clever and when he met Percy at another station he told him all about it. "I can read messages in the sky just by looking at the clouds!" he boasted.



6. Soon James met Percy at a signal. There was a triangular cloud in the sky! "What does that mean then, James?" chirped Percy. "It looks like a big heap of coal to me!"



7. James really didn't like Percy's idea about dirty, dusty coal but his driver had bad news! "I'm afraid Percy's right, James, our next job is at the coal yard!" he announced.

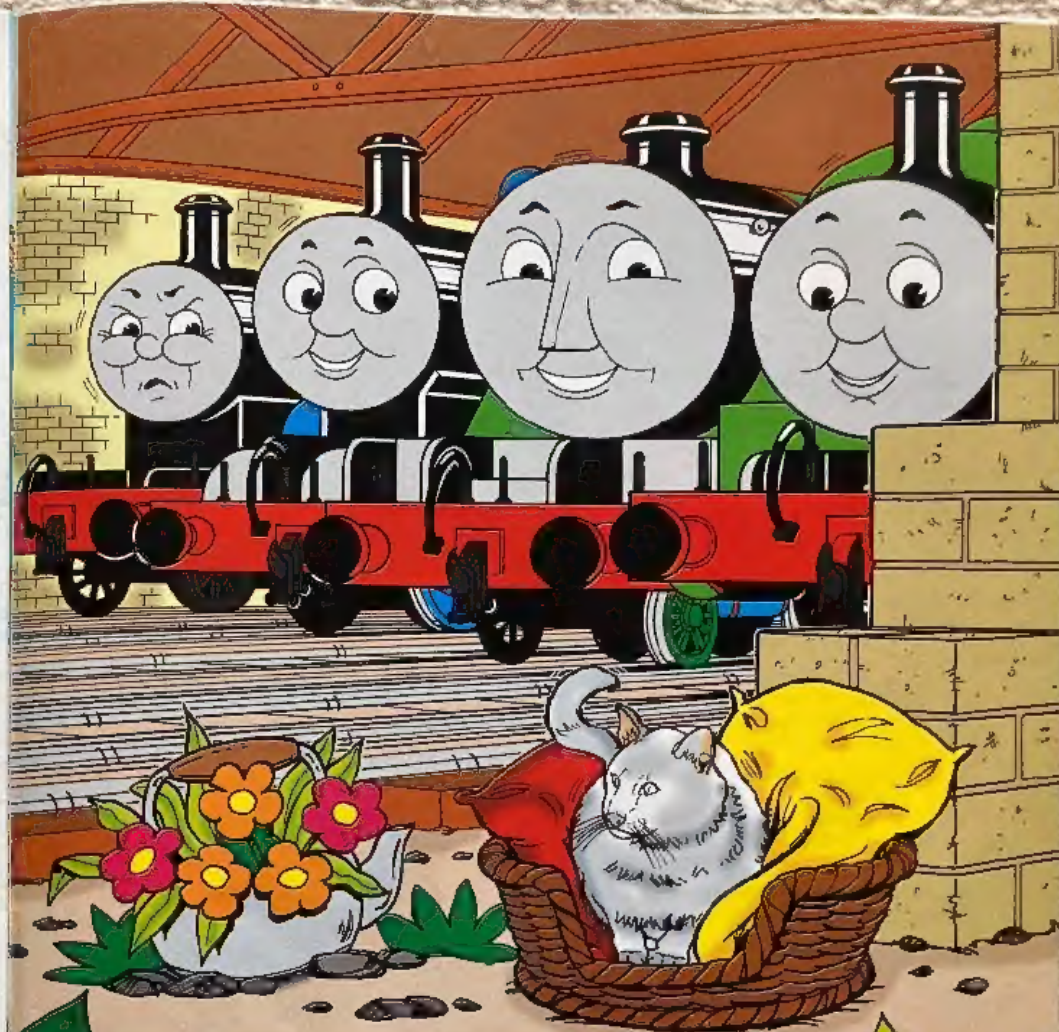


8. Percy puffed away grinning. "Tell us if you see any more messages in the sky, James!" James was cross. "Not coal delivery. I'm getting fed up of those clouds and their messages!"



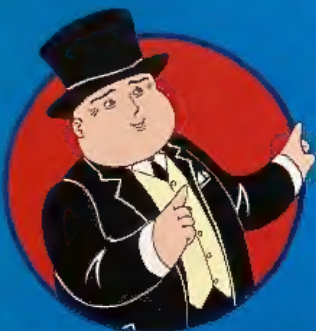
9. At the coal yard, big black clouds filled the sky. "More bad news, James!" warned his driver. "Big black clouds mean lots and lots of rain!" James let off steam, angrily.

10. Then, big drops of rain started to fall. "That does it, no more looking for messages in the sky for me!" James grumbled, as he finished his shunting for the day.



11. Soggy James was last back at the shed that night and all the other engines were waiting to have a joke with him. "What's the latest message, James?" called Thomas. "I saw an elephant-shaped cloud this afternoon!" laughed Henry. "Does that mean the circus is coming?" James tried to ignore them, he was just pleased to be out of the rain at last!

12. Then he saw Sooty curled up warmly in a basket in the corner. "It's all your fault, Sooty! If you hadn't met us at the station this morning, I wouldn't have believed in messages in the sky!" Sooty replied with a lazy shake of his tail and Percy added, "You should keep your eyes on the track and your mind on your work in future, James, just like I do!"



The mail train!

Please send your letters, pictures and drawings to Mail Train, Thomas, Marvel Comics, Panini House, Coach and Horses Passage, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, TN2 5UJ.

Star Letter

Dear Fat Controller,
How long is Thomas' branch line and what is the name of its furthest and most famous station?

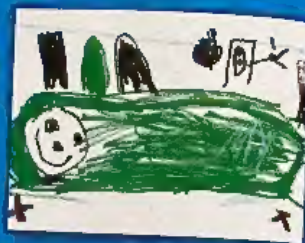
From Joshua Hoppen, aged 7.

Thomas' Line runs from Tidmouth for about 12 miles and passes through Knapford, Tollymore and Elsbridge. It then goes on to the little village of Ffarquhar where the line terminates. As for being famous, well, I think Thomas is more famous than the stations! He's helped out by his good friends Percy and Toby and Daisy.



If we print your STAR LETTER, you will receive a Branchline Playtrack as a prize!

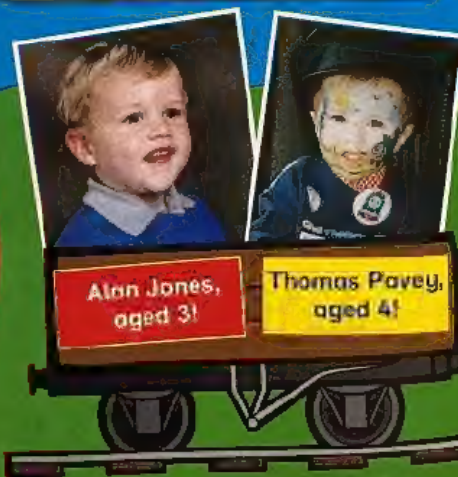
Lewis James from Huddersfield, has drawn a very good picture of Trevor the Traction Engine!



Prize Poem!

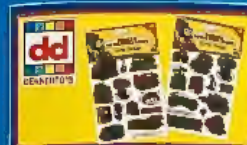
This prize winning poem by James Lewis is called "James the Red Engine".

James is my favourite,
His name's the same as mine.
He's always busy on the branch line.
His paint is shiny red,
He sleeps well in his shed.
He goes fast at top speed,
He is very useful indeed.



Alan Jones,
aged 3!

Thomas Pavey,
aged 4!

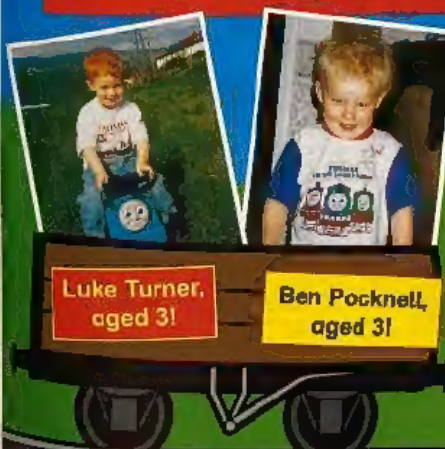


Anyone who has a drawing printed on this page will win a set of special Thomas Glitter Stickers.



Thank you very much, Alexander Fairclough, for your picture of Culdee the Mountain Engine!

Skarloey is hard at work!
"Peep, peep!" he says to the animals in the field. It's by 6 year old James Mason!



Luke Turner,
aged 3!

Ben Pocknell,
aged 3!

Percy's Jokes!

Have you got a favourite joke or funny story? Why not send it to Percy?

What animal do you look like when you have a bath?

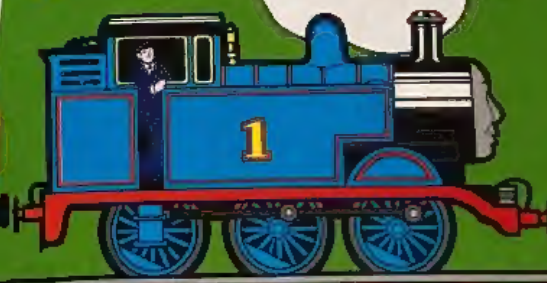
A little bear!
Flynn Kenny,
aged 2!

Why do birds fly south in the winter?

It's too far to walk!
David Lockwood,
aged 6!

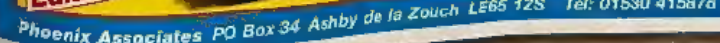
What flies and wobbles?

A jellycopter!
Barry Smith,
aged 3!



Happy Birthday

To: Michael Swan, aged 3,
Jonathan Blundell, aged 2,
Catherine Walter, aged 5,
Phillip Courtneil, aged 7,
George Wilmer, aged 3
& Oliver George King!





“Peep! Peep! Here comes the train!
And into the tunnel it goes!”

THE new Thomas the Tank Engine range of yogurts and fromages frais are loaded up with all the right goodies, and that includes vitamins and calcium for growing bones and teeth.

Made from whole milk and pure, smooth natural fruit purée, they make the perfect first foods for young Thomas's, Henry's, Annie's and Clarabel's everywhere. Mummy will be chuffed.



© Borden's International Limited 1997. THOMAS THE TANK ENGINE & FRIENDS is a trademark of Borden's International Limited in the USA, Mexico and Canada and of Borden's International Limited in the rest of the world.

